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Middletown Tercentenary

Connecticut

1650 - 1950

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PREFACE

THE members of the central committee in charge of the celebration of Middletown's three hundredth birthday have tried to make the event worthy of the city. The city's history is not only very long, but very honorable. From generation to generation, from century to century, its citizens have quietly but most effectively borne a part in every national movement, political, religious, economic, or social, which has contributed to America's welfare. They have never failed to do their share, or more than their share, in every armed conflict where the nation's principles have been at stake. In the very preparations for this celebration they have shown their marked sense of civic loyalty and responsibility. Credit for such success as the celebration may have will go primarily to the central committee's able and indefatigable chairman, Mr. Samuel Mattes; but hundreds of other Middletonians, from those most prominent in the city's life to young children, have eagerly contributed the best they had to give. In this they have been joined by citizens of some surrounding communities, which once formed part of Middletown, and which have shared to the full in Middletown's services to the nation. Middletown has always been a good place in which to study the working of American democracy.

HERBERT C. F. BELL,
Mayor of Middletown

CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
CONNECTICUT

HON. HERBERT C. F. BELL

Mayor, City of Middletown

Honorary Chairman of Tercentenary Celebration Committee

Program -- September 9 to 16, 1950

Saturday, September 9—10:00 a. m. City School Field
Connecticut Fife & Drum Corp.
Saturday, September 9—5:00 p. m. Old Legion Home
River Rondezvous.
Saturday, September 9—7:00 p. m. Main Street
Fife & Drum Corp Parade.
Sunday, September 10—11:00 a. m. Connecticut River
Outboard Races.
Sunday, September 10—4:00 p. m. Wesleyan
Church Services.
Sunday, September 10—9:00 p. m. City Hall
Band Concert, New Haven Salvation Army Band.
Monday, September 11—9:00 p. m. City Hall
Block Dance.
Tuesday, September 12—9:00 p. m. City Hall
Band Concert, Manchester Salvation Army Band.
Wednesday, September 13—2:00 p. m. State Armory
Historical Exposition.
Wednesday, September 13—8:00 p. m. Woodrow Wilson H, S,
Choralogue.
Wednesday, September 13—9.00 p. m. City Hall
Block Dance.
Thursday, September 14—2:00 p. m. State Armory
Historical Exposition.
Thursday, September 14—7:45 p. m. Woodrow Wilson H. S,
Choralogue.
Thursday, September 14—9:00 p. m. City Hall
Band Concert, Combined Schools.
Friday, September 15—2:00 p. m. State Armory
Historical Exposition.
Friday, September 15—2:00 p. m. Acheson Drive
Acheson Drive Dedication.
Friday, September 15—3:30 p. m. Municipal Field
Sports Events.
Friday, September 15—9:30 p. m. Coleman's Lot
Fireworks.
Saturday, September 16—2:00 p. m. Main Street
Parade.
Exercises at City Hall following dismisal of parade.
Saturday, September 16—9:00 p. m. State Armory
Costume Ball.

NOTE: *Historical Society will be open for visitors Monday, September 11th, Wednesday, September 13, Friday, September 15, from 2:00 p. m. to 4:00 p. m.*

SAMUEL S. MATTES

General Chairman of Tercentenary Celebration Committee

Famous Barnum Map of Middletown dated 1825
Property of Middlesey County Historical Society

Middletown 1650-1950

by Willard M. Wallace

Sailing along Long Island Sound in 1614, the Dutch sea captain, Adrian Block, sighted a noble-mouthed river which he followed until rapids stopped his ship, the *Onrust*. He learned that the Indians called the stream, "Connecticut," or "The Long River." For over two centuries afterward, the river was to be the chief influence in the development of the towns established along its banks. Where small pleasure craft and an occasional tanker, barge, or tug now ruffle its surface, one could formerly have seen the sails of bright-colored sloops bound for the West Indies, dingy two-masted schooners loading with brownstone for New York, and gleaming white passenger steamers plying between Hartford and New York. Viewing the Middletown water-front today from the new Acheson Highway, a newcomer might have difficulty believing that until comparatively recently a large part of the economic life of the community centered about the river and that at one time, thanks to the river, Middletown was a larger and more important city and port than either Hartford or New Haven.

The history of this country is in good part a history of the westward movement of peoples, and Connecticut was one of the first areas to experience this development. By 1639, six years after William Holmes of Plymouth Colony built a trading post at Windsor, more than eight hundred people, largely from Massachusetts, had settled in Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford. A group from England had founded New Haven Colony in 1638, and, during the early 1640's, Connecticut Colony acquired Saybrook and New London. As yet, however, no move had been made to settle in that part of the middle area known as Mattabesett, where the river makes a great bend to the east.

The earliest step in that direction was taken in 1646. In that year, the General Court appointed a committee to draw up plans for establishing a settlement at Mattabesett, which, in the Algonquin language, means, "End of the Carrying Place." The committee proceeded slowly, but finally, in 1650, the first settlers arrived. The new community became officially a town

Home of Col. Nathan Starr now D K E House
High Street, Middletown, Conn.

the following year, sent a representative to the General Court in 1652, and changed its name to Middletown in 1653. Very probably it acquired its new name by being about half the distance between the mouth of the river and Windsor.

Before the whites appeared, the territory was held by the Wangunks on the east bank and the Mattabesetts on the west bank. Actually the two may have been branches of the same tribe, for they appear to have had a single chief, Sowheag, who had been unfriendly to the Wethersfield settlers. It was claimed that some of his braves had aided a Pequot war party which had raided Wethersfield, killing six men and three women and capturing two girls. Sowheag refused to give up the Pequots and remained hostile even after a Connecticut army destroyed the ferocious Pequot tribe in their camp along the Sound. Eventually, however, Sowheag was persuaded to sell most of his territory. But the Indian title was not extinct, hence, in 1672, a committee purchased all of the Indians' lands on both sides of the river except for three hundred acres on the east

Steamer City of Hartford
in Collision with Airline Bridge.

side and a strip previously reserved for them which extended through what is now Newfield to Sowheag's former encampment on Indian Hill. After 1689, when the Assembly granted to Middletown, Wethersfield, and Farmington all the vacant lands between their boundaries, Middletown covered a far greater area than it does today. It extended south from what is now Rocky Hill to Haddam, west to include much of the present town of Berlin, and east to include East Hampton.

The earliest arrivals settled north and south of the Little River. The first meeting house was built in the vicinity of St. John's Square, the second, in 1670, in Main Street about opposite Liberty Street. Most of the homes clustered about the meeting house. By 1703, the community north of Little River, known as Upper Middletown or Upper Houses, became a separate parish and, in 1851, the town of Cromwell. Middlefield was incorporated in 1744. Westfield, settled about 1720, was established as a parish in 1766. East Middletown was settled in 1700, Middle Haddam in 1710. Subsequently the name of

Main and Washington Street — Corner Building is Now Garden Restaurant — Fountain Store Now in Same Location.

Blizzard of '88
Taken in front of former Meech & Stoddard Store.

East Middletown was changed to Chatham because its shipbuilding activities resembled those of Chatham, England; in 1841, it was called Portland after the great freestone port in England.

With all this spreading out one might think Middletown enjoyed an unusual growth in numbers. Actually Middletown's population increase, though steady, has always been slow. In 1654, there were thirty-one taxable persons; by 1670, there were still only fifty-two householders, though they included such famous Middletown names as Bacon, Briggs, Hall, Hamlin, Hubbard, Sage, Savage, Stow, Warner, Wetmort, and Wilcox. After 1670, the increase accelerated, much of it owing to the attraction of the rich farming country and the growing importance of commerce and shipbuilding. A population check in 1776 revealed 5037, a figure which included 201 negroes. The growth in the next three quarters of a century lagged, for the census of 1860 showed a population of only 8620. Though

Main and Washington Streets about 1886—Now Stueck Block Building in rear is on site of present V. F. W. Hall.

that number has increased by 1950 to just under 30,000, Middletown has fallen far behind New Haven and Hartford, both of which it exceeded in 1776.

Middletown forebears faced hard times. The land had to be cleared, houses and barns built, pastures and fields fenced, and crops planted, tended, and harvested. The sheer physical labor was enormous. Large families were needed, but, with medical knowledge primitive at best and scarcely available, the average life expectancy up to 1800 did not exceed thirty years. Disease, especially smallpox and dysentery, flourished. The weather was often unfriendly. The winters of 1696-97, 1737-38, and 1740-41 were exceptionally severe, but real suffering for lack of sufficient fuel occurred in the winter of 1779-80. It was during this same terrible winter that the Continental Army nearly starved to death in Morristown, New Jersey; the same winter, too, in which New York harbor froze so tightly that British soldiers were able to wheel cannon over the ice

from Staten Island to Manhattan. The heaviest snowfall until the blizzard of 1888 fell on February 17, 1717, and for more than a century afterward Middletonians referred to it as "The Great Snow." Many animals perished, and so high were the drifts that people had to leave their homes on Main Street via the second story windows. Heavy snows also fell in February, 1802, and on May 8, 1803. In July, 1779, hailstones half the size of hens' eggs destroyed the rye harvest in Chatham, while the great hurricane of September 22, 1815 wrecked crops, trees, bridges, houses, and shipping in both Connecticut and Rhode Island.

But the list of hardships does not end with nature or with the fact that there were fourteen offenses in Connecticut for which the death penalty was prescribed, including witchcraft, blasphemy, cursing or smiting of parents, and incorrigible stubbornness of children. In the 17th Century, there was a constant fear of Indians. Every town had its militia, or train band, and held regular training days. Colonial statute required

Principal Buildings of Berkeley Divinity School at Main and Washington Streets.

MAIN STREET CORNER OF CENTER STREET

that a force consisting of at least eight armed men and a sergeant must act as a guard at any assembly for public worship. During the early years of Middletown, this was the size of the guard that kept watch around the meeting house, a structure twenty feet square enclosed by a palisade. The people were summoned by the beat of a drum, and the men brought their muskets with them. Considerable apprehension existed that the local Indians might join the great Indian confederacy of King Philip in the war of 1675-76. Thanks, however, to an agreement worked out early in the conflict between the Council and Indian chiefs in Farmington, Hartford, Wethersfield, and Middletown, many of the Connecticut Indians joined the whites against Philip. In the campaign against him, as well as in the campaigns against Port Royal in Queen Anne's War, Louisbourg in King George's War, and Ticonderoga, Quebec, and Havanna in the Seven Years' War, Middletown helped share in men and money the heavy burden carried by Connecticut.

During the fifty years before the guns of Lexington, an

Main Street More Than 60 Years Ago, Looking South. Courthouse is White Pillared Building

Six Men Died When the Old Shepard Block Collapsed in 1873. Courthouse at Left with Middletown National Bank Left Center.

extensive trade developed between New England and the West Indies. The Connecticut River towns, especially Middletown, enjoyed booming times while the trade lasted. Prospects of profit gave a brisk incentive to farmers, who raised livestock in large numbers and heavy crops of wheat, rye, barley, oats, maize, flax, and English grasses. Merchants exported cattle, horses, lumber, staves, provisions, and grain, while imports included sugar, salt, molasses, and rum. So closely was Middletown's economic life tied to the sea that, by the outbreak of the Revolution, one third of the population was engaged in commercial activities. Among those identified with trade were such prominent citizens as Elijah and Nehemiah Hubbard, Lemuel Storrs, George Phillips, Comfort Sage, Matthew Talcott, and Richard Alsop, who was probably the most successful.

With trade brought to a standstill by the Revolution, Middletown quickly followed the lead of Connecticut's vigorous governor, Jonathan Trumbull, in supporting the cause against the King. Connecticut soon became the provision state as well as the chief source of munitions for the Americans. Middletown farmers raised quantities of beef and grain for the army. As for its part in the production of munitions, a lead mine had been opened prior to the Revolution near Butler's Creek as

it enters the Connecticut two miles south of the town. It was owned by Colonal James, a British officer. After the opening of hostilities, Connecticut seized what ore was ready for shipment and appointed a committee, consisting of Titus Hosmer, Jabez Hamlin, and Matthew Talcott, to operate the mine. The committee was headed by Hosmer, a learned, eloquent lawyer whom Noah Webster, the lexicographer, considered one of the greatest men Connecticut had produced. After three years, the ore became so difficult and expensive to extract that the mine was closed by order of the Assembly in Hartford.

Middletown also contributed its full share in men. Outstanding were Samuel Holden Parsons, Return Jonathan Meigs, and Comfort Sage. Meigs led a Middletown company of light infantry and Sage a troop of light horse to Boston soon after news of Lexington. Parsons and Samuel Wyllys were instrumental in initiating the enterprise to seize Fort Ticonderoga. Meigs later headed a company in Arnold's gallant expedition through the wilderness of Maine to Quebec. Taken prisoner

One of the Diggings at Portland's Famous Brownstone Quarries.

"Doc" McKee's Drugstore, Oliver Cone's Butter Store and Brewer's, near Court and Main Streets.

there, he was exchanged in 1777 and led a destructive whaleboat attack against enemy shipping in Sag Harbor, Long Island. Colonel Meigs also commanded one of the crack regiments of Continental light infantry in Mad Anthony Wayne's assault on Stony Point. General Sage served at Valley Forge. Formerly friends of Benedict Arnold, Sage and his wife hid the two little Arnold boys in their home on Cherry Street when excited Middletown crowds hanged the traitor in effigy. When Pres. Washington visited here on October 19, 1789 he talked with Sage and notes it in his diary for that date. Parsons commanded troops as a brigadier-general in the disastrous New York campaign in 1776, served on the board of officers that tried Major Andre in connection with Arnold's treason, and, as a major-general, led a successful attack in 1781 against the British at Morrisania outside New York.

The list of Middletown soldiers is quite long. Mention should also be made of Nehemiah Hubbard, who became deputy quartermaster under General Nathanael Greene, and of Elijah Hubbard, who was active as commissary and superintendent of the stores provided by the state for the Continental troops. Occasionally the families of men who were long absent with the army and received their pay in virtually worthless paper

currency suffered want. Middletown rallied loyally to these families. Among the families receiving assistance from the town were those of Colonels Meigs, John Sumner, and Jonathan Johnson; Captains Robert Warner, Edward Eells, Abijah Savage, David Starr and William Sizer, Lieutenants William Henshaw, Hezekiah Hubbard, John Hubbard, and Othniel Clark.

Few areas were more active than this in support of the cause. Many men served in the army. Others took to building ships. The frigate *Trumbull* was built over in Chatham and equipped partly in Middletown. The frigate *Oliver Cromwell,* though constructed in Saybrook, sailed from Middletown. Commercial houses in Middletown, Chatham, Middle Haddam, and downriver towns sent out many privateers to raid enemy shipping in the Sound and the West Indies. Meanwhile, other men looked after the morale of the home front. When William Franklin, the Tory son of Benjamin Franklin and British governor of New Jersey, was seized and sent to Middletown as a prisoner, responsible citizens here soon became so alarmed at his influence that they successfully entreated his removal to Newgate Prison in Simsbury. One sometimes tends to forget that the American Revolution was a civil war.

But at last the long struggle came to an end. With the

Middletown National Bank, Old Bank Block and Old Federal Building.

VIEW OF MIDDLETOWN IN 1868

Maj. General Samuel Parsons' House, Main Street opposite South Green — Built in 1753

risk of capture by enemy cruisers removed, American ships swarmed over the seas, and Middletown merchants sent their sloops, schooners, and brigs into the coasting trade to New York or down to the West Indies again. In 1784, Middletown was incorporated as a city, and the beloved Jabez Hamlin was elected as the first mayor. The first aldermen were Generals Parsons and Sage, and Messrs. Matthew Talcott and Philip Mortimer, owner of a large ropewalk on the west side of Main Street, north of Washington. The rural character of the city was still quite marked, if one can judge by the first local ordinance adopted, "A Bye Law Restraining Swine and Geese from Going at Large in the City." The following year, the first newspaper appeared, the Middlesex Gazette. A customs house was established in 1795. Middletown thus became one of the four Connecticut ports with customs houses, the others being New London, New Haven, and Norwalk. That same year, the Middletown Bank, now the Middletown National Bank, was chartered. The first fire company was organized in 1803, and several important ordinances were adopted; one provided "that if any person whatever shall be found smoaking of Segars in

Rev. Enoch Huntington House, Minister of First Congregational Church 1762-1809. High near College St. formerly Parsonage St.

any highway in the city, he shall forfeit and pay the sum of one dollar." The first insurance company here also made its bow in 1803. In a more strictly cultural way, the Middletown Library was founded in 1797 and the Middletown Circulating Library, in 1809.

Unfortunately for Middletown, and for all American ports, the great struggle between Europe and Napoleon had serious repercussions on our trade, with both England and France seizing our ships. Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1807 and Madison's Non-Intercourse Act of 1809 ruined New England commerce. Hardly had these acts expired when, under the influence of fire-eating leaders from the new West, the nation plunged into war against Great Britain, whose search of our ships at sea and impressment of seamen were bitterly resented. The war was so unpopular in New England that the state legislatures refused to let their militia serve outside state boundaries. Yet the war came close to Middletown, with the British ravaging Essex and destroying the shipping there. Middletown's greatest claim to distinction in the conflict was in the person of Commodore Thomas McDonough. In command of our light naval forces

on Lake Champlain, he decisively defeated a heavy British squadron in 1814, compelling the enemy army and what was left of the enemy fleet to withdraw from their concerted invasion of northern New York. He died at sea in 1825, but his remains were brought to New York and now rest in Middletown in what is popularly known as the "Riverside Cemetery."

From this struggle which saw American export trade dropping from $61,000,000 to less than $7,000,000 Middletown commerce never completely recovered. Commerce in general began now to leave small ocean ports like Salem and small river ports like Middletown, and centered, instead, in large cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. With this shift, enterprising men in Middletown turned to manufacturing. Already a start had been made. In 1810, the Allison brothers organized a soap company, and the Middletown Manufacturing Company erected a woolen mill, one of the first mills in the country to use steam as power. Another woolen mill was started by J. R. Watkinson on Pameacha River in 1814. During the war, Middletown became an arsenal. Colonel Simeon North's pistol factory at Staddle Hill on West

Horse Drawn Trucks of the Middletown Fire Department
Douglas Hose Co. No. 1 and O. V. Coffin Hook & Ladder Co.

R. & J. D. Johnson Gun Shop
Mill Hollow

River (now the Arrowanna) produced 20,000 cavalry pistols for its initial government contract, and it is still a point of argument whether North or Eli Whitney (who received the credit) was the first to make firearms with interchangeable parts. East of the North factory was that of Colonel Nathan Starr, which produced annually about 5000 swords and also made muskets and rifles. The Johnson factory on the lower Pameacha made rifles, too, and a powder mill on West River turned out about 5000 casks of powder each year. In 1823, the Sanseer Manufacturing Company (later taken over by the Russell Company) was established, and, in 1832, the W. & B. Douglas Pump Works. Two years later, the Russell Manufacturing Company was organized with a capital of $100,000 and incorporated by Samuel Russell, Samuel D. Hubbard, George Spaulding, and others for the manufacture of cotton webbing (one knows the company better now for its brake lining activity). The firm which later became Wilcox, Crittenden, & Company made its appearance before 1850, one of the earliest manufacturers of marine hardware in the country. Later businesses—and there were many—included the hammock

mills of I. E. Palmer, which were established about 1860, the Middletown Plate Company, organized in 1866; and the Goodyear Rubber Company, incorporated in 1875. Incidentally, during the industrial expansion of the mid-century, with heavy traffic increasing on Main Street, many fills had to be made. It has been said that once there was such a depression in front of the McDonough House "that a person standing there could not see over a rise just below, so as to discern a load of hay passing a bridged ravine a little further onward."

Middletown might have become a major industrial city but for the difficulty over transportation. When the railroads appeared in the 1830's and it was proposed to build a line between Hartford and New Haven, Middletown was divided about the desirability of being on the line. Though a number of far-sighted citizens thought the railroad offered greater opportunities for future development than the new steamboats, certain commercial interests simply could not see having the line. Surveys eventually convinced railroad officials that the Middletown route would be both indirect and expensive in view of the grades and heavy cutting. Hence the best that Middle-

Main Street Looking North — 1815

River Schooner with Old Railroad Bridge forming the background.

town could get was a branch line to Berlin in 1849, a line that now runs without passengers and only as far as East Berlin.

But the struggle for a railroad went on. In 1846, a charter was secured for the New York and Boston Railroad to build eastward from New Haven with a drawbridge at Middletown. A bitter fight ensued between its proponents in Middletown and its Hartford opponents, who included the steamship interests and the governor. Not until 1868 did the bridge interests obtain a clear and final victory. The company was reorganized under David Lyman of Middlefield as president and O. Vincent Coffin as treasurer, a Middletonian who became governor of Connecticut (1895-97). The bridge was finished in December, 1872 and traffic to Willimantic opened in August, 1873. Unhappily the line proved expensive to construct ($6,000,000; Middletown's share, $897,000) and unprofitable to run. The company took out mortgage bonds in 1875 and reorganized the following year as the Boston and New York Air Line. The change helped it scarcely at all. In

1882, it was leased for 99 years to the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, and, in 1927, passenger service was suspended. From a spectator's point of view the most exciting part of the railroad's dismal history occurred in the early 1890's when the New England Terminal Company, using the Air Line tracks, sent its famous flyer, all cars enameled white with gilt lettering, streaking through the dusk among the Connecticut hills. Inspired by his sight of the White, or "Ghost" Train, Rudyard Kipling, whose mother-in-law lived in Middletown, wrote a short story entitled, "007."

A year before the railroad bridge was completed, a line linked Saybrook and Hartford. As the Connecticut Valley Railroad, it proved a poor money-maker. Middletown had purchased $242,000 worth of bonds, and Middletown citizens, including O. V. Coffin, Henry Hubbard, and J. W. Hubbard, invested heavily in it. As if angered by the turning over of so much soil in the construction, hordes of mosquitoes soon scourged the region below Middletown so severely with malaria that hundreds of people, particularly summer visitors,

After Fire Wrecked Part of the Wilcox-Crittenden Company Plant — 1907

Wreckage After Disastrous Fire at Court and Main Street.

fled, never to return. In 1880, the line was reorganized as the Hartford and Connecticut Valley Railroad Company. Finally, in 1933, harassed by the lack of traffic and mounting expenses, the line discontinued passenger service. Middletown is now bereft of all direct railroad passenger service. To catch a train, one must go by bus to Meriden, many of whose citizens, before the railroads were built, used to come regularly over the hills to Middletown to do their trading and shopping.

Even as the railroads came and, in some places, went, so river and coastwise steamers suffered the same experience. No longer does one see the "white swans" of the Fall River and other lines adorning the blue waters of the Sound, nor does one spy the white hull of the *Hartford* or *Middletown* against the green foliage of the hills above the Narrows. It is hard to realize that steamboating on the Connecticut is a thing of the past. For years after 1824, when the *Oliver Ellsworth* began her runs to New York, stopping at Middletown and other river ports en route, people took the steamers to their hearts. A tricky channel, storm, collision, fire, and

fog did little to depress the enthusiasm. People were not even frightened away by such dreadful happenings as boilers bursting, an event which so excited a courier to the Legislature in Hartford that he cried out, "The Eliver Ollsworth has biled her buster!" One especially spectacular incident took place in March, 1876 when, a white light on the Middletown bridge being out, the great paddle-wheeler, *City of Hartford*, drove head-on against the bridge span west of the draw, hitting it so hard that she carried the whole span away on her upper deck. But the early nemesis of the steamboat was the railroad. The New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad bought up most of the competing lines of steamboats, including the Hartford and New York Transportation Company. The automobile, the truck, and the Great Depression completed the job, and, in the fall of 1931, the river steamboats joined the Ghost Train, to live only in the memory of those who loved to see the white flume rise from the *Middletown* as she whistled for the landing and to watch the passengers jostle one another to get aboard as the graceful steamer slid alongside the wharf between Washington and Court Streets, a wharf that is now but a row of sagging pilings.

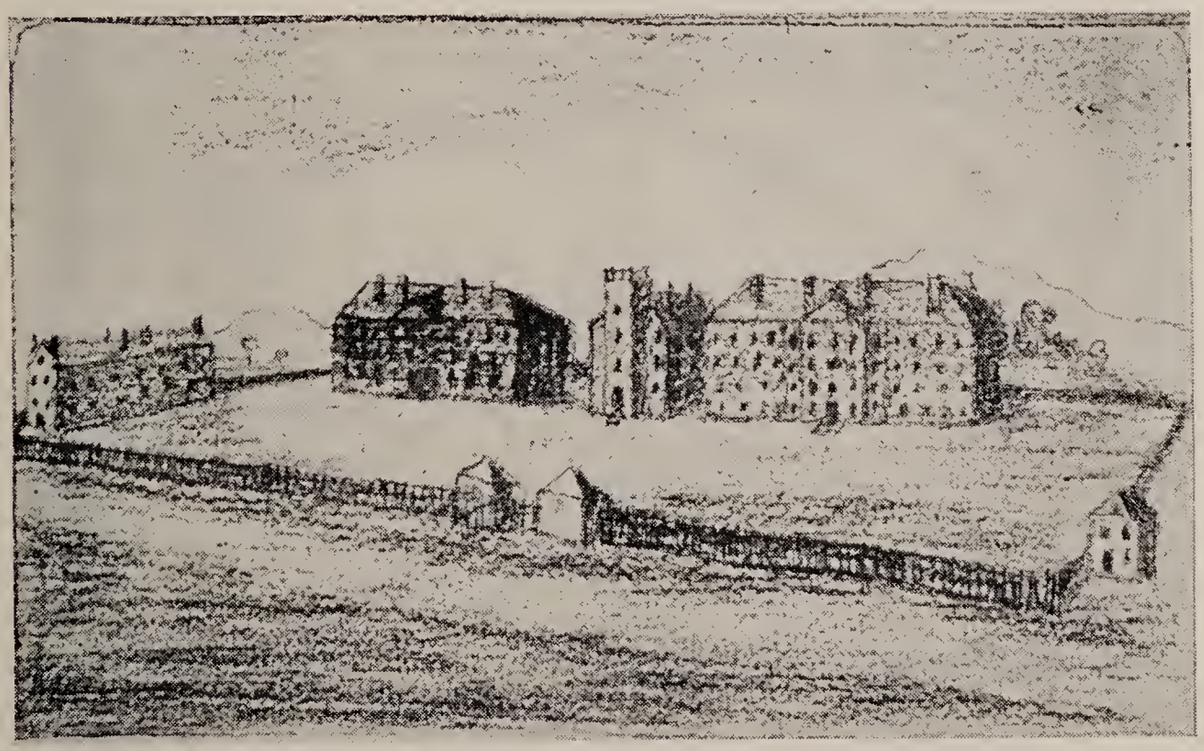
Broad Street, looking south from Washington Street

Capt. Alden Partridge — Age 40

When the Civil War cast its shadow over the land, Middletown rallied to the country as it had done in the Revolution. It contributed over $5,000,000 and sent 958 men into service from a population of less than 9000 in 1860. These men fought on many of the principal battlefields of the war. On April 17, 1861, Governor Buckingham called for volunteers, and, on April 20, Company A of the 2nd Connecticut was complete, every man from Middletown. One company of the 4th Connecticut, later the 1st Heavy Artillery, marched away on May 16 composed entirely of Wesleyan students. For several weeks in the fall of 1862, the 24th Regiment under Colonel Samuel H. Mansfield trained on Fort Hill, south of the town. One of the heaviest losses incurred by Middletown was the death of the able General Joseph H. K. Mansfield at the Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862. He died leading his corps in an assault against that part of Lee's army under the command of Stonewall Jackson. His body was brought back to Middletown and buried with full honors in Indian Hill Cemetery.

With the end of the war, Middletown men more fortunate than Mansfield returned to their homes singing a new, rousing song composed by another Middletonian, Henry C. Work, entitled, "Marching through Georgia."

Despite wars and preoccupation with industry and commerce, Middletown did not forget other important factors. In an effort to secure an institution of higher learning, the town authorities offered inducements in 1824 to locate Washington College here. The effort failed, and that institution rose in Hartford, later to be known as Trinity College. The town had more success persuading Captain Alden Partridge, a former superintendent of West Point, to move his Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy from Norwich, Vermont. A dormitory and a chapel (North and South Colleges) were constructed, and the Academy opened in 1825 Since the Legislature refused permission to grant academic degrees, the Academy returned to Norwich in 1829. Presently the buildings were secured by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a new institution was launched in 1831 as Wesleyan University under President Wilbur Fiske. Though chartered as a university, Wesleyan



American Literary Scientific and Military Academy Middletown. Conn. — A. D. 1826

Ancient Hose Cart of Hubbard Hose Company
Pictured Near College Street

has chosen to remain a small New England college, emphasizing a liberal arts program and small classes. It is completely non-sectarian and has numbered many famous and distinguished scholars among its faculty, including a young instructor of history and government who later became president of Princeton University, governor of New Jersey, and president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson.

It is perhaps appropriate that on High Street, where Wesleyan fronts, the street which Charles Dickens is reputed to have considered the most beautiful in America, some of the great Middletown mansions of the 19th Century were erected. One of the finest examples of its type of architecture in the country is the former Alsop house at the head of Court Street. Another imposing structure is the present Honors College at Wesleyan, formerly the Russell home. In China for the tea company which he owned in New York, Samuel Russell wrote home, asking his wife to build a suitable house. A future

postmaster-general of the United States who was a friend of the Russells, Samuel Hubbard, figured that $5000 would be about enough. Needless to say, thanks to Mrs. Russell's own ideas and also the architect's, the structure cost somewhat more. The architect, spying the columns of the demolished Eagle Bank in New Haven, hired every yoke of oxen he could lay hands on to drag the massive Corinthians to where they now stand. When finished, the mansion was fittingly grand for one of Middletown's most distinguished citizens and a tea merchant whose clipper ships were renowned for their beauty and speed.

Not to be omitted from mention of Middletown's cultural development is the Berkeley Divinity School. Before being moved to New Haven it had been in Middletown for many years. Famous clergymen guided the studies of its students, including Bishop John Williams and Bishop E. Campion Acheson. It acquired its site on the southwest corner of Main and Washington Streets in the early 19th Century. Originally Jabez Hamlin had lived there, his flower gardens extending

Starr Sword and Gun Shop
Starr Pond, Staddle Hill

Looking North Toward Main and Washington Streets.

almost to Court Street and attracting visitors for miles around. After his house was torn down, a company was formed in 1812 to build the Washington Hotel on the location. The city entertained Commodore McDonough at the hotel in 1814, and General Lafayette when he revisited America in 1824. In fact, Lafayette's stay was the occasion for probably the most lavish reception which the city has ever accorded any guest. Subsequently the hotel was presented to the Episcopal bishop of Connecticut, Bishop John Williams, for his residence and for the Berkeley Divinity School.

In keeping with the social progress of the time, other institutions appeared. The city established a high school in 1840. A hospital was constructed in 1866, the year in which city water began to flow. That same year, Middletown gave 158 acres to the state for an insane asylum; the property has since been enlarged to several hundred acres. An industrial school for girls, the present Long Lane Farm, was incorporated in 1868 and opened in 1870. In 1875, the Russell Library

was established by Mrs. Russell in memory of her husband. Following the Russell Library came that interesting American institution, the YMCA.

As the turn of the century approached, Middletown reflected the nation in numerous interesting ways. It was the age of the open-car trolley, the bicycle, and the brass band. Middletonians crowded the trolleys to Lakeview Park to hear the popular operetta of the day. Bicyclists packed lunches and rode tandem or singly to the beautiful Westfield Falls, now unfortunately closed to the public. On a hot summer evening people jammed Main Street to hear Briggs' Band play just south of where the Capitol and Palace Theaters now stand. In a few years, these same people would be singing the melodies of *Robin Hood*, composed by their fellow townsman, Reginald De Koven, but in the 1890's they were filling the new Middletown Theater (now the Middlesex) to applaud the great Joseph Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle*. They accepted the Spanish-American War with the enthusiasm manifested throughout the country, and sent volunteers to the conflict. But in all its activity Middletown still preserved some-

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View of Center Street Looking East.

The "Flatiron" Building — Corner Main and Grand Streets.

Simeon North Gun Shop
West River, Rockfall

thing of the unhurried, unspoiled, cultural atmosphere of which the historian John Fiske spoke so highly at the 250th Anniversary in 1900.

With the 20th Century have come changes of profound import, some of them in process before 1900. Middletown in 1800 was Protestant, largely Congregationalist, and almost entirely Anglo-Saxon. In the 19th Century, the Irish were the first to arrive in numbers, followed by Germans, Swedes, Jews, and a few Italians; then, in this century, came many Italians and Poles, and other peoples as well. The result is a rich mixture of racial strains, typically American in their variety. The change is never more apparent, nor more wonderful to contemplate, than when comparing the surnames of those who fought in the Revolution and those who served in both World Wars. In connection with the racial change is another, the present variety of churches. Where originally were only Congregational churches, now are to be seen, in addition, other Protestant churches, Catholic churches, and a synagogue. But whatever the racial strain, whatever the religion, all adhere

View Showing Middletown National Bank, First Congregational Church, Customs House, Postoffice and McDonough House.

to the same principles of law and government, and all worship—each church in its own way—the same God.

The first part of the century, Middletown helped fight World War One and subsequently enjoyed an expanding abundance. It oversubscribed most of the Liberty Loans, watch the ROTC unit drill on the Wesleyan campus, crowded Main Street to observe parades, sent many of its citizens to war, and worked in its factories on war material. After the war, Middletown joined the nation in drinking of the cup of prosperity. The seven automobiles that the city boasted in 1903 were multiplied many times by 1929. New houses went up in many parts of the city, and the brickyards in the Newfield area flourished. Only the railroads through Middletown and the steamers that stopped en route between Hartford and New York seemed to be suffering in a financial way.

Then came the shattering depression, the gloomy 1930's, and World War Two. Factories closed down, and Middletown had its bitter experience with unemployment, the WPA, and management-labor difficulties. Bright spots were the pageantry

of Wesleyan's Centennial in October, 1931, the success of Middletown's own Allie Wrubel as a song-writer, the opening in 1938 of the new bridge to Portland to replace the bridge built in the 1890's, and the cooperation evinced by all people during the destruction and distress caused by the hurricane of September 21, 1938. Finally the war broke out and drew us in. Once again the factories turned to war work, and Middletown men and women entered the service of their country. Their record was a proud one.

The years since the war have been interesting but uneasy. Middletown has enjoyed another housing boom and looks forward with satisfaction to the prospect of improvements in the water system and to driving over the new Acheson Highway. Employment, generally, has been high, and patronage of the many fine local stores heavier than ever. The student enrollment to Wesleyan has hovered around 1000, and, until a veterans' village was built, one saw women's and babies' apparel drying on lines in a dormitory that, for many years, had been strictly male. Former President James McConaughy became governor; Professor Wilbert Snow, lieutenant-governor; and Raymond Baldwin, an old Middletown boy, governor, United

Main Street Looking South
Tibbals Block on the left.

States senator, and judge on the highest tribunal in Connecticut. Middletown, however, has watched with special pride and sympathy the service of its own Dean Acheson as secretary of state. President Truman's stand against the aggression of communism in Korea was applauded by the Middletown Press and by many responsible citizens. The "police action" of the United Nations has come to have a very personal meaning, with young men already called for the draft. In fact, the conflict struck the city with pecular force on August 1, 1950 when the announcement was made that the 43rd Division was to be called into federal service; Company K, 169th Infantry, is Middletown's own company. With the future thus becoming increasingly uncertain it may be helpful to realize that, in times of past adversity, Middletown, like the nation, has been at its best. One does well to examine the past, especially in an era such as this, because from a study of how our forebears solved the problems of their age we may be able to face the issues of our own day with increased wisdom, resolution, and hope.

Little League Baseball, organized baseball for boys 8 to 12, was first introduced to Connecticut in Middletown during 1948 under the sponsorship of the Loyal Order of Moose, No. 1547. Until 1948 only six states were playing the game but since then, in the space of three years, some 37 states are playing Little League Baseball.

Through the cooperation of the Moose, under Governor William Coughlin, the program was introduced by Bernie O'Rourke, a member of the Moose. The Moose sponsored a four team league the first year, South Farms, St. John's, St. Sebastian's and Staddle Hill. South Farms won the first title and performed in the Second Annual Little League World Series at Williamsport, Pa.

The same league has been in tact for the third straight year. In 1949 the Pat Kidney League was formed, with the Odd Fellows, Merchants, Eagles and Elks sponsoring Clubs.

Connecticut in 1950 had 45 official leagues and 17 unofficial leagues with about 10,000 boys playing Little League Baseball. Players are completely uniformed in official leagues.

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